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Project Title:

Engaging students in ethical debates through a new pedagogical paradigm to ensure ethical practices in enterprise

Project Team:

Dr. Aftab Dean School of Marketing

Abstract:

There has been much debate as to how to define ethics but a simple definition proposed by Gbadamosi (2004 p.1145) is used throughout this research which refers to ethics as “the rules and principles of right and wrong conduct”. There is mounting evidence in the accountancy discipline (Kerr and Smith 1995) that students believe that a lack of ethics damages the profession. This concern is also voiced among public relations practitioners who suffer from a declining reputation of shady spin-doctors (Marshall 2002 p.111). The practice of business professionals over the last decade has exposed numerous examples of organisations lacking moral integrity from the collapse of Enron and Arthur Anderson and more recently the global collapse of banks. McCabe et al. (1991 p.959) had long warned about the dangers of ‘American business’s preoccupation with short-term bottom-line results’ which he highlighted would lead to a culture of being results orientated and individuals willing to make compromises. Research by Pizzolatto and Bevill (1996) targets the blame at business schools for failing to convey the ethical responsibilities to their graduands. There is support for this views by Gbadamosi (2004 p.1156) who advocates “the mission of a business school is to turn out professionally competent managers who have learned to consider problems from a general management perspective and who have acquired a high sense of moral and social responsibility their future position of power demands”. Therefore if business schools are to inspire noble virtues in their students there is a heightened need for a discussion (Duarte 2008 p.12) and inclusion of ethics in the curriculum of business degrees (Vallen and Casado 2000; Crane 2004; Sims and Felton 2006; Karassavidou and Glaveli 2006 p.349). Peppas and Diskin (2000 p.347) note that there has been heightened interest in teaching ethics to business students. This has partly arisen due to the rising concern of academic dishonesty (defined by Roing and Detommaso (1995) as acts of cheating and plagiarism) amongst students in higher education (HE) through increasing incidents of plagiarism and cheating (Davis et al. 1992; Maramark and Maline 1993; Allen et al. 1998 Hopper 2008; Broughton 2008). The challenge of teaching ethics and engaging students in ethical debates for a tutor remains a pedagogical dilemma. The current approach is leading to a disengaged and de-motivated student cohort and if universities are to promote ethics in entrepreneurial ventures then we will need to adopt a more inclusive and engaging approach to enable students to nurture entrepreneurial attributes (see Gibb (1993 p.2); Garayan and O’Cinneide 1994; Jack and Anderson (1999 p.119); and Gibb 2005). This view was succinctly supported a decade ago by Cunningham (1999 p.695) who advocated “we will need to rethink our approach in the classroom moving sharply from the deductive end of the spectrum to a more inductive approach”. Consequently this research investigated the acceptance of a new pedagogical paradigm to engage and inspire students in ethical and entrepreneurial pursuits. The research proposes a dynamic pedagogical delivery style that is peppered with a Socratic style of questioning. To enable students to critically evaluate their values the practices of business higher learning and the pursuit of business practices from a more socially balanced business perspective.

Project aims:

This project aims to identity the ethical values of students and which of these values they have compromised during their studies at University. The results would provide a basis for understanding what motivates students to compromise their ethical values and whether a pedagogical solution to ensuring that ethical integrity is promoted in all modules can be developed.

Process:

This research pursued a multi-method approach to collecting the data whereby initially interviews were carried out with students to identify their ethical values and what behaviour they frowned upon at university and how the university could promote ethical integrity in business. The findings from the interviews were translated into likert scale items that were surveyed to a much larger group of university students. The sampling exceeded the necessary size to draw reliable and valid conclusions. To ensure that the results would be generalisable students from two different universities were sampled. To complement the findings of student survey academics teaching ethics and entrepreneurship at 100 UK universities were sent an open ended questionnaire to provide the researcher an insight into entrepreneurial education and pedagogical delivery of ethics.

Outputs:

The author is currently working on the completion of a book chapter on ethics and an article publication of teaching ethics in Higher Education. I have successfully delivered a paper at a conference in April on engaging students through my new pedagogical model. The paper was awarded a special prize for its significant contribution to advancing our understanding of the field of study.

Impact:

What was quite revealing and some may say shocking was that business students in higher education had been involved in a number of unethical practices to ensure academic success during their studies at university. An unexpected benefit of this research was the discovery of a new pedagogical framework to engage students to not only promote ethics but to also involve and inspire students in a lecture. The biggest challenge that this research faced was the initial low response rate to the open ended Email survey from academics who teach ethics. This was partly resolved by interviewing academics who have been extensively involved in ethics research.

Evaluation:

To determine the acceptance of many of the findings of this research the author will look to the acceptance of his academic papers for journal publication as a measure of the success of this project. It is hoped that in the future that academic modules will have an ethical skills matrix as part of the requirements of the learning outcomes of the module.

What next?

There are a number of transferable learning outcomes from this project for any enterprise module. Firstly students need to be engaged in a dialogue about ethics to highlight the dangers of compromising values. Secondly that the pedagogical framework for engaging students in a lecture is applicable to any teaching scenario. Thirdly ethical considerations need to be assessed as part of any business assessment.

General conclusions:

When I started this research journey I did not expect that the results would have such a profound affect on me. I have become aware of how little ethical education our students receive and how disengaged our digital generation students are with the traditional pedagogical delivery by lectures. Consequently I have now made a conscious effort to include the assessment of ethical considerations in all business/marketing assessments and have committed myself to pursuing a dynamic and Socratic delivery of lectures to inspire and engage students. I would like to thank Dr. R. Bampton Dr. G. Calder R. Ashcroft L. Clavey and R. Warren for their helpful comments and research on engaging students in ethical debates.

Keywords:

Ethics
Students
University
Curriculum
Pedagogy

Ethics research project

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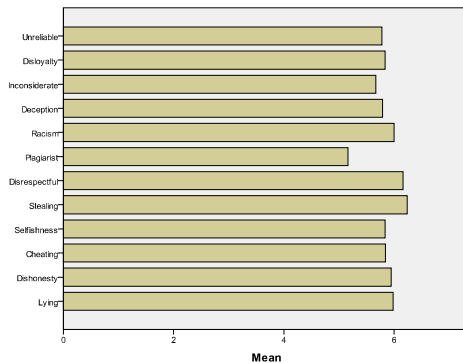
Overview of ethics research

Methodology: Triangulation:

- Qualitative and Quantitative survey of student ethical beliefs (sample 150 and 300 respectively)
- Lecturer Survey of entrepreneurial Education (sample 53)
- Survey of ethics tutors **(to do)**
- Survey of SMEs to identify ethical challenges **(to do)**

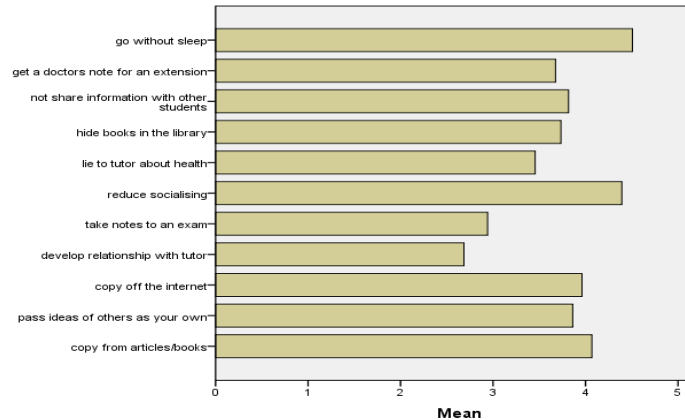
Unacceptable Unethical behaviour:

Stealing, being Disrespectful, Lying, Racism



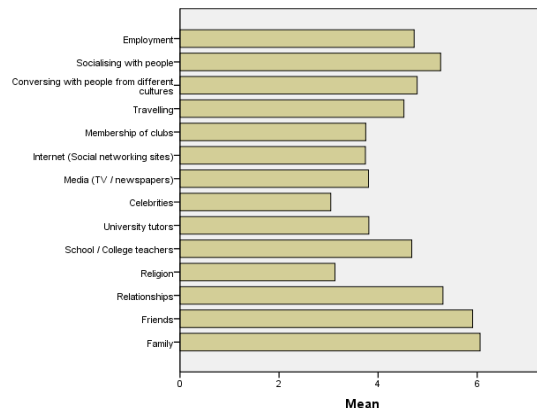
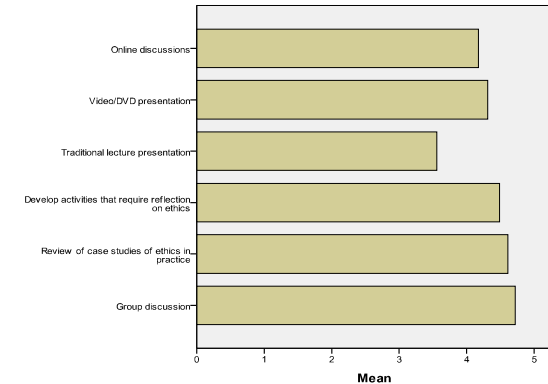
Unethical behaviour to pass an assessment:

Plagiarise from books/Internet; Disclose information from fellow students; Lie about health;



How should we teach ethics:

Students want group discussions, review of case studies and innovative pedagogy to develop reflection of unethical practices (e.g. Visit former MDs in prison for corporate crime)



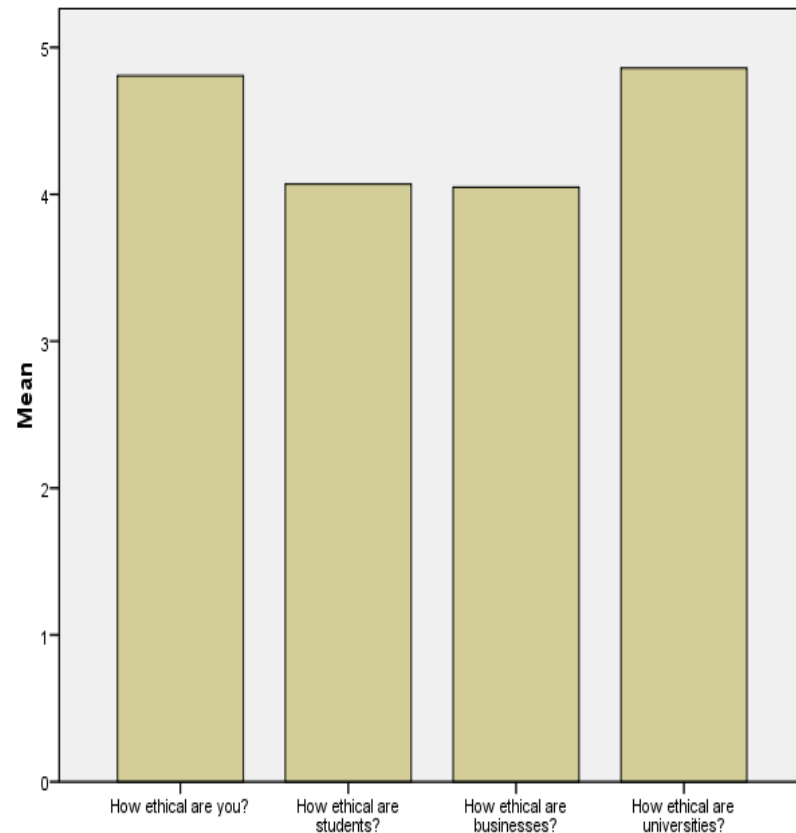
Who has the most ethical influence on students?

- Family,
- friends,
- relationships,
- socialising,
- Work colleagues,
- School,
- Travelling.

Should we be teaching ethics if students have already developed concepts of ethical behaviour before arriving at UNI?

Need for ethics in curriculum?

Students perceive other students and businesses as not living up to ethical expectations



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Students have become aware of unethical practices from a plethora of institutes and groups:

- ☐ Media (bbc telephone scandal);
- ☐ Banks (bonuses paid on taking unethical decisions);
- ☐ Businesses (Enron, Worldcom – financial deceit);
- ☐ Marketers (ads that promote unethical consumption – obesity and environmental damage);
- ☐ Politicians (expense claims);
- ☐ Religion (abuse of children by clergy);
- ☐ Family (rising divorce rates, litigation);
- ☐ Fellow students (who engage in plagiarism, drug taking, binge drinking, etc)

How do we inspire entrepreneurship at UNI?

(academic survey)

Pedagogy

- Active learning
- Creativity workshops
- Business simulation
- Practical projects
- Case reviews
- Guest lectures (practitioners)
- Online tools (SNS)
- Blended learning

Curriculum

- Business skills (template)
- Building transferable skills
- Creativity
- Problem solving
- Self confidence
- Networking
- Negotiating
- International dimension
- Digital awareness

Assessment

- Business plans
- Panel review – DD
- Practical solutions
- Sponsorship of solutions
- Portfolios
- New learning outcomes

We need to ensure that our entrepreneurial education has ethics embedded in the curriculum, assessment and seminar activities.

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How do we inspire entrepreneurship at UNI?

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Online tools (SNS)
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Curriculum

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International dimension
Digital awareness

Assessment

Business plans
Panel review – DD
Practical solutions
Sponsorship of solutions
Portfolios
New learning outcomes

Uni – investment

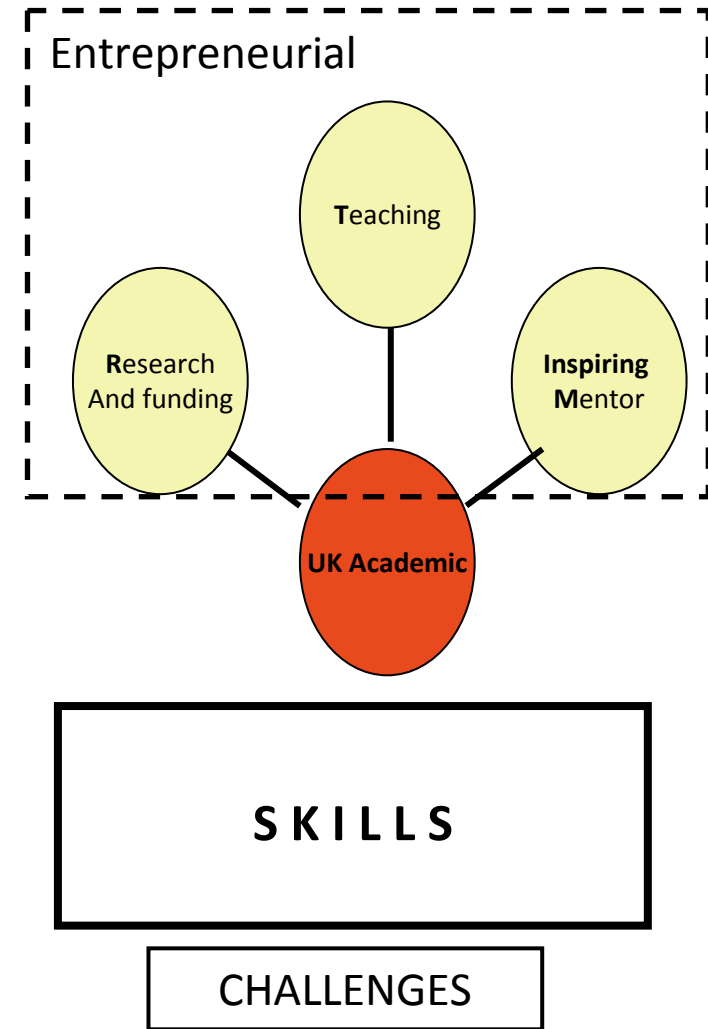
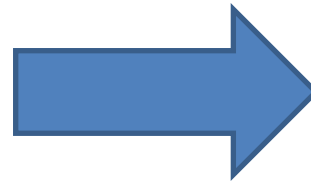
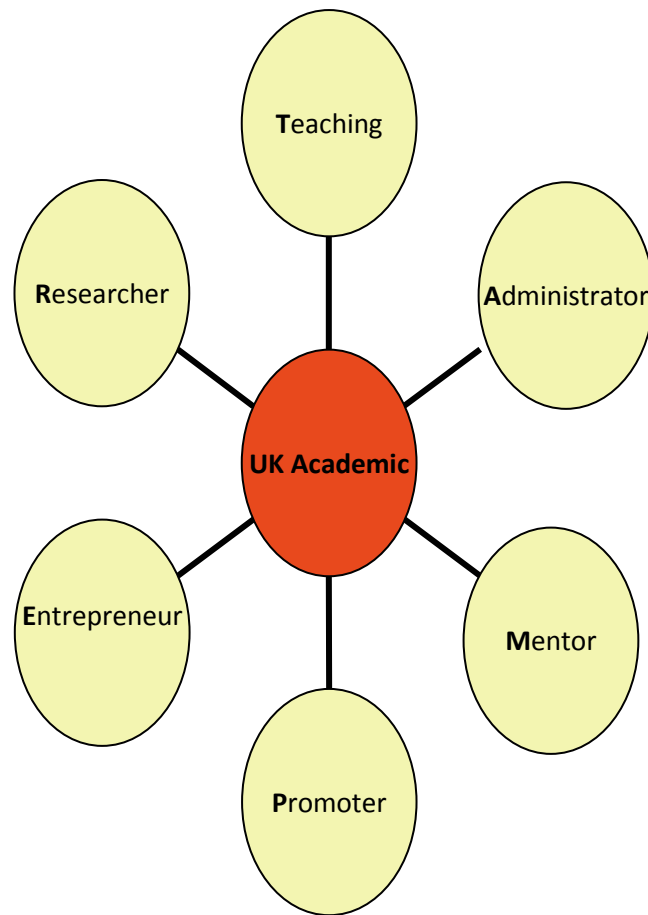
- Vision
- Stop tamper(ing) with staff
- Investment in staff research and enterprises
- Training workshops
- Re-orientation of teaching weeks
- Promotion of enterprise / week
- Website development of enterprise and use of SN facilities

- Facilitation of cross disciplinary collaboration
- Support for risk taking (pedagogy and enterprise)
- New courses
- Enterprise hot-desk in each faculty
- New structures
- Empowerment

- Development of partnerships:
- Govt / RDA
- Local enterprises
- Institutes: national / international
- Synergy
- New metrics to measure success

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Realigning academic workloads to promote ethical entrepreneurship



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Optimal flow of work balance leading to higher motivation, loyalty, commitment and stellar effort.